



# Congressman Mike Simpson

## E-Newsletter

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### Simpson and Otter Vote for Tax Relief for Married Couples

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** - Congressmen Mike Simpson and C.L. 'Butch' Otter hailed passage today of a House plan that will prevent tax increases on 30 million married couples. The marriage penalty relief bill will return \$12 billion to working families.

**"The only vow a couple should make on their wedding day is to each other, not to the IRS," Simpson said. "The average family of four will see their taxes rise by over \$300 if Congress doesn't act this year."**

"This is simply a matter of fairness. Government has no business imposing a financial penalty on marriage. Daily assaults on our traditional institutions and values are bad enough without the feds piling on with counterproductive tax policy," Otter said. "Congress did the right thing by eliminating the marriage penalty and keeping more money in taxpayers' pockets. Now it's our responsibility to make that positive change permanent."

Before 2001, a married couple earning similar incomes paid more in taxes than two single taxpayers filing individually. Tax relief passed by Congress in 2001 phased out these penalties by providing couples a standard deduction that is twice that of single taxpayers. Today's House action would continue the benefits of the 2001-passed tax relief and prevent married couples from facing the following average tax increases:

Resulting Increases From Failure to Extend Full Marriage Penalty Relief

Income Range	Average Current Income Tax Liability	Average Tax Increase	% Increase in Tax Burden
\$10k-\$15k	\$6	\$33	563%
\$15k-\$20k	\$168	\$116	69%
\$20k-\$25k	\$592	\$126	21%
\$25k-\$30k	\$954	\$127	13%
\$30k-\$40k	\$1,525	\$178	12%
\$40k-\$50k	\$2,466	\$188	8%
\$50k-\$75k	\$4,645	\$260	6%
\$75k-\$100k	\$8,274	\$573	7%

Source: Tax Foundation Individual Tax Model

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## Weekly Website

**www.medicare.gov**  
is website of the week! Seniors  
go and check out the new  
Discount Saving Cards that will  
soon be available!

## Did you know?

The American economy grew at a strong pace of 4.2. percent during the first quarter of 2004—well above the historical average, and continuing the strong growth seen over the previous two quarters. Economic growth over the last three quarters has been the fastest in nearly 20 years at 5.5 percent annual rate that would double the size of the economy in 13 years.

## Message from Mike

Thank you for taking the time to read my E-Newsletter. I hope you find the information useful. If there is specific information you would like to see added, please let me know, by sending me an e-mail to [www.house.gov/simpson/contact.shtml](http://www.house.gov/simpson/contact.shtml)

## Quote of the Week

“Under God will appear in the day’s Congressional Record whether the words were spoken or not.”

**Rep. Mike Simpson’s** answer while he was Presiding Officer to an inquiry whether ‘Under God’ is part of the pledge of allegiance.



## A National Energy Plan to Fuel America

### Reducing Dependency, Creating Jobs

Energy is the lifeblood of the economy. Economists agree—energy represents the most significant underlying cost of doing business in America. It drives our economy.

### Renewable Fuel Standard:

- The Renewable fuel standard in the Energy Bill will create more than 214,000 new jobs and expand household income by an additional \$51.7 billion over the next decade.

### Nuclear Energy:

- Building a first-of-its kind nuclear reactor to co-generate hydrogen will create 3,000 construction jobs and 500 long-term, high paying, high-tech jobs.
- Nuclear production tax credits will spur the construction of approximately 6 light-water nuclear reactors for a total of 8,400 megawatts of clean and affordable energy. This construction will create between 12,000 and 18,000 jobs. Running the plans will create more than 9,000 high-paying, high-tech jobs.
- The Price Anderson renewal in the bill would protect 61,800 jobs at 103 plants nationwide.

### Renewables:

- Incentives for geothermal energy will bring between 350 and 500 megawatts of clean and renewable geothermal energy online over the next three years. This will create between 750 and 1000 direct jobs and between 7,500 and 10,000 indirect jobs.
- Incentives for solar energy will assist in creating 20,000 new jobs in the solar energy industry by 2010.
- Biomass provisions will put 1,000 people back to work in at least 20 biomass plants from New York to California that have been idled.
- Incentives for wind will help create an estimated 5,285 new megawatts of clean and renewable power through 2007. Each new megawatt of wind energy creates between 15-19 direct and indirect jobs, for an estimated 100,000 new jobs through 2007.

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# Discount Drug Cards Mean Savings for Seniors

*By Congressman Mike Simpson*

On May 3, seniors can sign up for Medicare's new prescription drug discount card. The drug discount card will help millions of Medicare beneficiaries save money on their medicines and will provide critical assistance to vulnerable, low-income seniors.

Seniors can sign up for the cards starting in May and begin using the discount cards on June 1, 2004. Annual fees for the cards will range from \$0 to \$30, and the government will pay the enrollment fees for those seniors who qualify for low-income assistance. In addition, these financially-strapped seniors will receive up to \$600, both this year and next, to assist with the cost of their medicines. According to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), cardholders will receive discounts between 10 – 25 percent on their prescription costs.

Already, more than 70 organizations have received Medicare approval to offer discount cards which will all carry the Medicare Approved seal. This logo deems the card as Medicare-endorsed and ensures specific government-backed consumer protections.

With many choices available, seniors can compare different cards to find one that best meets their individual health care needs. There are two easy ways to determine which card is the best card. The official Medicare website, [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov), provides customized information, based on the particular needs of each senior, about the differences in drug coverage, pharmacy participation and prices among the available cards. If a senior is comfortable using the Internet, this website is an excellent resource to do it yourself. A senior's family members or volunteers at churches, senior centers and civic organizations with Internet knowledge can also help walk someone through the process.

However, if a senior does not have access to the Internet, similar assistance is available by phone, toll free, at 1-800-MEDICARE. Seniors can also ask the Medicare operator to send them a personalized booklet of this information to assist in their drug card decision.

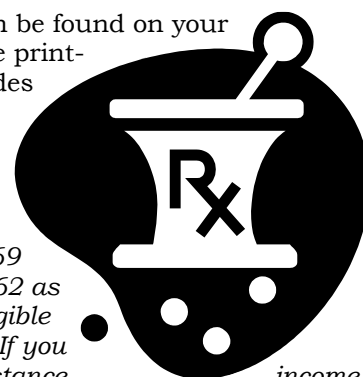
Before seniors log on to [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) or calls 1-800-MEDICARE to begin this process, they should have the following information ready:

*What prescription medications are you currently taking?*

1. Name of each drug
2. The dose (pill size)
3. How often you take the drug (for example, two times a day)

All of this information can be found on your prescription bottles or the print-out your pharmacy provides when you pick up your prescriptions.

*If you're a senior with annual income below \$12,569 as an individual or \$16,862 as a couple, you might be eligible for financial assistance. If you think you qualify for assistance, income statements or tax forms can be helpful when figuring out your monthly income.*



Once a senior decides which card is best, he or she can contact the company to sign up for that particular card. When the enrollment form has been approved, the company will send a Medicare-approved drug discount card. The company will also send specific materials need like a member handbook, discount drug list, pharmacy provider directory, and other information.

The availability of these cards will provide tangible benefits to millions of seniors. Sponsoring organizations are using the cards not only to provide discounts on drugs but also to link card enrollees into other available disease management and wellness resources to help them better manage their own health care.

This discount card program is the first concrete step toward making the promise of a Medicare prescription drug benefit a reality for our seniors.

Any senior interested in saving money on their prescription drugs should call 1-800-MEDICARE, or contact my Seniors Outreach Coordinator, Fran Symms located in my Boise District office, 208-334-1953 to get the necessary information.

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# Idaho Delegation: RFP Changes Strengthen the Idaho National Lab

*DOE announcement focuses on contract length, university provisions, employment stability*

Washington, DC – Idaho Senators Mike Crapo and Larry Craig and Idaho Representatives Mike Simpson and C.L. “Butch” Otter joined with Idaho Governor Dirk Kempthorne in welcoming the announcement today made by the Department of Energy regarding changes in the final Requests for Proposal (RFPs) and the new Idaho National Laboratory (INL). In recognition of concerns raised by the Idaho delegation and Kempthorne, the DOE has incorporated several key decisions in the final RFPs, which are now scheduled for mid-May 2004.

Crapo said, “I appreciate Secretary Abraham’s willingness to improve the RFP and listen to the concerns from the Idaho delegation and the public. The changes will bring more stability to the successful contractor, which will strengthen the DOE site and benefit the community.”

Craig said, “These changes will fortify the linkage between the two new contractors - at least for an initial period. That dependency is going to be essential in smoothing the transition for both the INEEL and Argonne West work forces. These were pivotal issues for us. I am glad they are decided and that bidders can begin to adjust their proposals accordingly.”

**“I’m grateful the DOE has agreed to these crucial changes which I believe will help establish a strong foundation for the future success of the Idaho National Laboratory and help alleviate the concern of site employees regarding the security contract and bus service,” said Simpson. “I commend Secretary Abraham and Deputy Secretary Kyle McSlarrow for working directly with the Idaho Congressional Delegation on these changes to the RFPs and for their willingness to consider our concerns.”**

Otter said, “I appreciate the flexibility and responsiveness that these changes indicate. The revised RFP shows that the Energy Department understands the INL isn’t some abstract government facility. It’s a source of pride and collective achievement, and it’s the engine of entrepreneurial initiative in the region. The contract terms and how the lab is run make a big difference to folks there, and to America’s energy future.”

Kempthorne said, “For the INL to succeed as a world class laboratory, it needs sustained investment, strong infrastructure, and a climate that attracts a top caliber workforce and fosters innovation. DOE asked how to improve the RFPs to ensure the lab’s future, and today we see DOE has taken our concerns seriously. We will see a longer contract term, more time to stabilize infrastructure and funding, and stronger requirements for private-university partnership.”



Among the decisions announced:

- The base term for the INL contract will be ten years with an option for up to an additional five years.
- The previously-announced separate award of a Safeguards and Security contract to a small business will now be integrated into the management and operating contract for the INL.
- Prospective contracts must include a plan to establish a joint laboratory/university center for advanced energy studies in Idaho.
- Current site infrastructure and services will be maintained and shared by the INL and ICP contractors for two years.